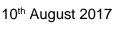
Amnesty International Southend Group

www.amnesty,org.uk/southend amnestysouthend@googlemail.com







Thayyib Shaheem Maldives

Activist arrested for 'spreading panic' online

Social media activist Thayyib Shaheem was arrested on 16 March for 'spreading panic' online after criticising a controversial development project. He faces a 15-month sentence. The police claim Thayyib, a supporter of the opposition Maldives Democratic Party (MDP), was arrested for his tweets on the recent swine flu outbreak. Amnesty, however, believes it related to his public criticism of a proposed large-scale development project involving Saudi Arabia on the Faafu atoll, southwest of the capital Malé.

In early March a crackdown was launched on the media, opposition parties and opponents of the project. The Criminal Court in Male' threatened 'legal action' against journalists who 'disrupt the peace and stability of Maldives', while police raided the MDP's headquarters.

APPEAL Urge the authorities to immediately and unconditionally release Thayyib Shaheem, and drop the criminal proceedings against him. State that he is a prisoner of conscience, detained solely for peacefully exercising his right to freedom of expression. Call on them to respect the rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly, and end the harassment of journalists and media outlets.

Minister of Home Affairs Azleen Ahmed Ministry of Home Affairs 10th Floor, Velaanaage Male'

Republic of Maldives

Salutation: Dear Minister

His Excellency Mr Ahmed Shiaan Embassy of the Republic of Maldives 22 Nottingham Place London W1U 5NJ

Salutation: Your Excellency